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Cleanup Crew Working

Stories from the Roadside

The new wraps

Family & Friends of Leroy Day of Fauquier County found beer bottles wrapped in Dave's America's Best Hot Dogs wrappers.

Sweet smell of pickup success

Nan and Ray Clarke of Greene County found a wonderful bottle of perfume (almost full!) while picking up their stretch of road.

Senseless acts of beauty/random acts of kindness

The Southern Albemarle Philosophical Society picks up trash near a cemetery. The group reports that the wind blows many of the plastic graveside flowers into the gulleys and pasture fencing, which form strange new arrangements. The philosophers practice random graveside visitations and "replant" many of the flowers on the graves.

BYOB (Bring your own bags)

The Friends of Spruce Creek Park in Nelson County noticed that a local man drinks beer under some trees on a regular basis along their stretch of roadway. Because his beer containers account for about four bags of trash on every pickup, the group started putting out trash bags for him. He is happy to fill them with his empties.

Almost the whole enchilada

Quonset Hunt Club in Suffolk found two car tires and two automobile seats. Perhaps they will find the rest of the car on their next pick up.

Eye on the ball

The Amelia County High School Air Force Junior ROTC found a baseball with a photo imprint of planet Earth on it. They also found a usable chain from a chain saw. They are obviously doing their part to "cut" the litter found on this stretch of road.

Cat in the cradle and a silver spoon

The Oak Park Hokies of Madison County found a box of kitty litter and a silver spoon on their most recent pickup. Where was little boy blue and the man in the moon?



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THE PICKUP EXPRESS



News and Ideas for Adopt-a-Highway Volunteers

Fall Clean up

You are receiving this Pickup Express with more than a month of summer yet to go, but before you know it, the leaves will be falling once again. And we all know the litter has been falling as well! Mark your calendars for Sept. 18, the day chosen for Virginia's fall clean up. Make plans for your group to pitch in on that date now.

The goal is for a majority of the states to observe the same date in the annual Great State Trash-Off so that Adopt-a-Highway volunteers will be out in force on the third Saturday in September. Plus, the job will only get more difficult if you wait to clean up after the leaves have fallen!

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Join in, and help a road near you say, "... aah." The Trash-Off is a special, one-day opportunity to clean up litter and listen for Virginia roads to breathe a collective sigh of relief.

This is Virginia's 16th annual statewide litter pickup. The first was held on Oct. 8, 1988.

FAQ of the month

Q. What do I do about all the political signs I come across this time of year?

A. Adopt-a-Highway groups frequently encounter and pull the realty, yard sale, business or election signs (a.k.a. "popsicle signs") placed in VDOT rights-of-way. Unfortunately, those who erected the signs aren't always aware of the highway law and some have confronted our volunteers.

Adopt-a-Highway volunteers who remove such advertisements are acting as VDOT's representatives, and as such receive the department's full support. Before you remove signs, check with your local VDOT office to see if there are any signs that have been permitted. Also, pick up all of the litter along your adopted section - not just the signs.

Tell us what you want to read about!

Pickup Express is your newsletter, so please let us know of topics you'd like to see covered, questions you'd like to be answered and suggestions you might have. To share your ideas, please call 1-800-PRIDE VA (1-800-774-3382) or e-mail us at adoptahighway@VirginiaDOT.org

Commissioner's Column



Litter, litter everywhere. Adopt-a-Highway volunteers have told me that their jobs are getting harder and harder. People just don't seem to care

about their roadways anymore. I hear you, and I am pleased to tell you that there are some new programs in the works that should help make life easier.

The first is legislation passed this General Assembly session that will allow citizens, companies and local governments to adopt an interchange or a median strip to spruce up. Not only are these individuals and groups asked to keep the area free of litter and debris, they are also invited to plant trees, flowers and shrubs that will enhance the surrounding area. Texas has a similar program in place that has been very successful in beautification efforts.

Another initiative is the Litter Control Task Force (see related story in this newsletter). The task force has just begun to tackle the Commonwealth's mounting litter problem, but we are looking into what needs to be done, and how we can do it.

VDOT maintains 57,000 road miles, and we have 300,000 acres of turf alone. We simply do not have the manpower and budget to manage it all, so we've got to solicit some help. Between these two new efforts and your consistent presence on our roadways, I believe we can Keep Virginia Beautiful!

Philip

Philip A. Shucet

Why I volunteer



Joanne Robergé

Joanne Robergé has a more compelling reason than most for adopting a highway. Robergé's late husband, Bill, was always disappointed to see litter near and around their home. Unfortunately, he died on the day after Christmas in 2002 – just 24 days after the couple was married.

Somehow, Robergé of Rockbridge County managed to turn a tragedy into something positive. Not only did she make sure that Bill's organs were donated per his wishes, she also adopted that stretch of road and keeps it clean in his honor.

How I help the environment: "I also pick up cans and newspapers for recycling."

How I spend my spare time: "I work on my husband's flower gardens, and add to them every year."

VDOT developing guidelines for roadside beautification

Virginia's roadsides got a boost this General Assembly session when Gov. Mark Warner signed SB 260 into law. It became effective July 1. The bill requires the Virginia Department of Transportation to develop and promote regulations for a comprehensive roadside management program that includes opportunities for individual, community and local government participation.

The program allows VDOT to authorize such individuals and groups to provide landscape materials, services, funding and signing to enhance their community and surroundings.

"Sen. Charlie Hawkins from Lynchburg introduced the bill because area corporations wanted to be able to plant flowers and manage the plant beds by their property. This bill allows private companies and others to do so," said Brian Waymack, assistant division administrator for roadside management.

VDOT is in the process of developing guidelines for such commitments, and hopes to have regulations in place by February 2005. The public is invited to comment on the program. More information can be found on this Web site: <http://www.virginiadot.org/infoervice/rmr-rev.asp>

Litter Control and Beautification

Following are five ways to help Virginia's environment.

1. Recycle at work and home.

Virginians recycle about 37 percent of their recyclable waste, or 2.9 million tons annually – higher than the national goal of 35 percent recycling by the Year 2005. Do you do your share? Contact your local government to find out what recycling services are available to your community or company, or call the Virginia Recycling Association at (888) 867-1923.

2. Prevent pollution – Use nature's cleaners or household chemical products properly.

Many household products – paints, solvents, cleansers, herbicides and pesticides – are hazardous. Be careful when using chemical products: Read the label, buy only as much as you need and use it for the purpose intended. Like commercial products, homemade substitutes may do the job depending on product ingredients and the task at hand. Call (603) 868-1496 to order a simple, inexpensive guide.

3. Save water.

No matter where you live, water conservation can save money on your water bill or extend the life of your septic system. Repair leaky faucets. A dripping faucet can waste 20 gallons of water a day, a leaking toilet 200 gallons. Take short showers instead of baths – a bath uses 30 to 50 gallons of water, a short shower only 10.

4. Maintain your septic system.

If your septic system fails, its untreated waste could pollute Virginia waterways and groundwater. Your system is not working properly if drains and toilets empty slowly or if effluent seeps upward from the ground. Know the location of your system and how it works. Have your septic tank pumped out every three to five years to prevent water pollution and upward seepage.

5. Save household energy.

With winter approaching, try lowering your thermostat at night or when no one is home. Turn off lights not in use. Gradually replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. Run dishwashers and washing machines only when full (use cold water to rinse clothes, and let dishes air dry for further savings). Weatherize your home by caulking windows, weatherstripping doors and insulating the roof. Insulate your hot water heater and turn down the temperature setting.

Roadside Remedies



Adopt-A-Highway volunteer Charlie Drumheller with the Beverley Manor Ruritan Club found a way to make picking up easier to manage, and easier on his back. He takes along a wheeled trashcan on his pickups. This allows him to throw cans and other items into the trashcan from a distance. It also makes it easier to

navigate once the bag gets filled. A filled bag can weigh 40 pounds or more. He stores empty bags at the bottom of the trashcan for easy refills.

You are Not Alone

You're frustrated because you keep picking up litter and it keeps showing up. You ask "What's being done to prevent this trash from getting to our roadways and waterways in the first place?"

Actually, there are several efforts going on statewide, but they're not coordinated. That's why a task force of state agencies and groups involved in litter control, prevention, education and enforcement-related activities and programs has been formed to assess those efforts and recommend where improvements can be made.

The members represent the Virginia departments of transportation, environmental quality, game and inland fisheries, conservation and recreation, forestry, health, state police, education and tourism. The Virginia Litter Prevention and Recycling Fund Advisory Board and Virginia's Organized Industries for a Clean Environment are also represented.

The task force is interested in your thoughts. Check www.virginiadot.org <<http://www.virginiadot.org>> in late summer for a Web survey giving you a chance to offer your ideas and suggestions for improving litter control throughout the state.

Assign –A-Highway working in Buchanan

Buchanan County's litter problem might soon be a thing of the past thanks to the county's circuit court that early last year assigned 33 probationers to pick up litter through the new Assign-A-Highway program. Probationers assigned to community service are given specific sections of primary roads in Buchanan County in three- to five-mile increments to keep clean. They were provided with safety vests and orange trash bags, as well as briefed on the program and made aware of the consequences if they chose not to pick up the litter along their sections of the road.

They are keeping litter under control on Routes 460, 80, 83 and 609. More probationers are waiting to be assigned, so creeks and riverbanks might be covered as well.

Buchanan County is the first county to implement the Assign-A-Highway program.